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# STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

# RESERVE COMBAT UNITS/NECESSARY COMBAT POWER

BY

**COLONEL GREGORY J. VADNAIS United States Army National Guard** 

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Colonel Gregory J. Vadnais
United States Army National Guard

Colonel William J. Doll
Project Advisor

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U.S. Army War College Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania 17013

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## ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: Gregory J. Vadnais (COL), USARNG

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Dramatic changes are progressing in the United States
Army designed to meet future readiness, budget and force
structure goals. While the active component of the Army has
been reduced to ten divisions, reserve component combat
forces assigned missions have not been deployed and the
combat power contained in the eight guard divisions have
been relegated to a strategic hedge. This paper will
analyze the history leading to this situation and illustrate
that reserve component combat units meet or exceed readiness
and mobilization standards. It argues that Guard combat
brigades are ready for operational missions and with similar
resourcing the Guard divisions can meet readiness criteria
which must be included in current force structure plans.

## INTRODUCTION

The United States Army has not made significant use of reserve component combat units since the Korean Conflict. If this trend continues, the U.S. Army will not be capable of meeting the likely challenges of the 21st Century. Future threats and the resourcing to meet those threats will require an integrated force of Active, Guard and Reserve The debate over the wisdom of deploying reserve component combat units to a theater of operation must end. Now that the Army National Guard of the United States has the full combat reserve mission and fifty-three percent of the combat power, future plans must include all three components of the Army. This paper will analyze the recent history surrounding the use of reserve combat forces since the Korean War and illustrate that these forces clearly meet or exceed any readiness standards with a minimal post mobilization training.

## BACKGROUND

Planning for the deployment of reserve combat units in a combat theater remains a source of contention among the active component, the reserve forces, and members of Congress. The most complete statement depicting the concern was made in the 1993 Rand Study.

Even with the focus on regional rather than global contingencies, the projected force structure is not so robust that the active components can go it alone. If we put even more support units into the reserve components, the president will have no choice but to call up the reserves even before he makes a final decision to deploy forces. Getting the reserve combat units into the fight will be more important than ever, but there are some realities concerning peacetime readiness and the time it takes to prepare reserve combat forces.<sup>1</sup>

Combat support and combat service support forces proved their capabilities during Desert Shield and Desert Storm. They mobilized on short notice and performed their assigned missions which validated a portion of the Total Force concept. The thrust of the Total Force policy implies the same readiness and deployability standards for active and reserve units. As a result of the Total Force policy, modern reserve combat forces are more capable and better trained. Aspects of the policy are now being questioned as a result of the non-deployment of the Army National Guard combat brigades for Desert Shield/Desert Storm.

The United States Army is now in its seventh year of drawdown and will continue to be reduced following the recommendations of the Bottom-Up Review (BUR) completed in 1993. Considering the budget constraints and the increasing operational tempo (OPTEMPO) of the active Army, there will be no alternative but to utilize reserve component combat forces for operational missions such as peacekeeping, peace enforcement, and other intervention operations as well as

combat missions. Many active duty soldiers are currently deployed up to 180 days each year. Deployments will continue to increase as United States forces are committed around the globe. In order to understand the current posture of the U.S. Army, it is necessary to review the history of reserve component involvement.

#### VIETNAM

Reserve component combat units played a significant role from the Revolutionary War in 1775 through the Korean War. Since the Korean War there has been a unwillingness to mobilize reserve combat forces by the National Command Authorities (NCA). In 1965, one-half of the sixteen active divisions were in the continental United States. Five divisions were in Europe, two in Korea and one in Hawaii. The military was gearing up for war in Southeast Asia without the reserve combat forces which had been training for such a mission.

Former President Lyndon Johnson astounded the defense establishment by refusing to call up the reserves to support expansion of the war in Vietnam. Johnson's refusal was apparently motivated in part by reluctance to spread the effects of the war through the population. Many more families and virtually every town and city would be affected

by a call-up of any proportion. The mobilization of National Guard and Reserve units involves a diverse cross-section of the population and much greater political impact than draft calls. Another reason for Johnson's unwillingness to call up the reserves was the hope that he could prosecute the war on a low-key basis. As George Carver later put it, Johnson, "tried to fight a war on the cheap and tried to fight a war without acknowledging that he fighting a war." This eliminated the prospect of mobilizing reserve forces for the war.

President Johnson's decision had a far reaching, long lasting, and devastating effect on the active component as well as the reserves. Active duty Army officers and NCO's were sent back to Vietnam involuntarily for second and third tours. This caused a tremendous hardship and burden on their families. This situation also caused many of the Army's professional soldiers to leave the service rather then face another tour in Vietnam and separation from their families, further reducing the pool of talent for the Army. In contrast, Lewis Sorley summarized the reserve component view: "The dedicated reservists who had for years spent much of their free time and effort to maintaining individual and unit readiness were bitterly disappointed that here was

the very kind of crisis they had been preparing for, but they were not permitted to take part in it".3

General Johnson, a former Chief of Staff of the Army, unsuccessfully attempted three times to get the President to mobilize the reserve components. General Johnson felt so strongly about the issue that he was quoted as saying to a colleague: "I cannot continue as the Chief of Staff". Although he did not quit, years later after his retirement, he told Bruce Palmer that his greatest regret was that he had not resigned in protest over the President's failure to mobilize the reserve components of the Army. 4

As Chief of Staff of the Army, Creighton Abrams was very troubled that reserves were not mobilized and wanted to ensure that never again would a President be able to send the Army to war without the reserves. He was the principal architect who revised the Army's force structure which integrated reserve and active elements so closely as to make it virtually impossible to field the Army without reserves. When Abrams became Chief of Staff of the Army the plan was to bring the active Army from nineteen and two thirds divisions to thirteen. Abrams decided to commit to building sixteen divisions. Abrams built into the sixteen-division structure a reliance on reserves such that the force could not function without them.<sup>5</sup>

General John Vessey, later Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, briefed the "Roundout" concept to the Reserve Forces Policy Council, putting Vessey right in the middle of what Abrams was trying to do. Vessey was asked whether part of the thinking in integrating the reserves so deeply into the active force structure was that it would make it very difficult, if not impossible, for the President to deploy any significant force without calling up the reserves.

"That's it, with malice aforethought," said Vessey, "the whole exercise."

The roundout concept was that one brigade in each of the three new divisions would be in the Army National Guard and would complete, or roundout, the parent division upon mobilization. The Army policy was that a roundout unit had the same equipment priority as its parent unit. The roundout unit was also supposed to have a close training association with a parent active unit, receiving considerably more active support for its training than a comparable stand-alone reserve unit in a National Guard division. The roundup is a related concept to roundout. Roundup units were available to deploy after an appropriate period of training and add capability to fully formed active divisions already in theater; a roundout unit augmented the usual force structure of the parent unit.

Colonel Harry Summers, a member of the Astarita Group, a "think tank" of outstanding officers that Abrams used to help him address key strategic and planning matters, understood Abrams' intent:

The post-Vietnam Army General Abrams sought to create was designed deliberately to form an interrelated structure that could not be committed to sustained combat without mobilizing the reserves. This structure became a reality by 1983, when roughly 50 percent of the army's combat elements and 70 percent of its combat support units-engineers, maintenance, transportation, communication, and supply-were in the National Guard and Army Reserve. General Abrams hoped this...would correct one of the major deficiencies of the American involvement in the Vietnam War-the commitment of the army to sustained combat without the explicit support of the American people as expressed by their representatives in Congress.

### DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM

The next opportunity to test Abrams concept was in August of 1990 when Iraq invaded Kuwait. Combat support and combat service support were immediately mobilized and successfully deployed to Southwest Asia. No infantry or armor reserve brigades were deployed, in spite of the fact that two of the Army Divisions sent to the desert had roundout brigades from the Army National Guard. This time it was not the political leadership that failed. The military leadership decided not to deploy the combat brigades. Some questioned whether Army National Guard combat units could attain the training readiness required for future conflicts. This view stemmed from the

misconception regarding the performance of the National Guard units mobilized for Desert Shield and Desert Storm. The fact is the Army was able to rapidly deploy 23 Army National Guard colonel-level commands and 37 lieutenant colonel commands to the US Central Command area of operation. Two Army National Guard field artillery brigades deployed to Saudi Arabia within 45 days of being mobilized and performed well in ground combat, supporting the British 1st Armored Division, the U.S. VII Corps and French forces.

Three combat brigades from the Army National Guard were eventually activated, but none of them were ever deployed. Had they deployed and been permitted to take part in serious ground combat, then contemporary judgments on the Total Force policy might well have been validated on the battlefield.

The doctrinal call up list developed by Department of the Army and Forces Command (FORSCOM) included the ARNG roundout brigades associated with the active Army divisions that were deployed to the Persian Gulf; however, the final list omitted those units. When it became known that this initial list did not contain any reserve force combat units, members of the Army National Guard and Congress reacted.

Concern of the decision not to deploy any reserve combat units was addressed by Les Aspin the Chairman of the Armed Services Committee, in a letter dated September 6, 1990 to the Secretary of Defense Richard B. Cheney. Aspin reminded the Secretary of the tremendous investment the nation had made in resources and upgrading in the reserve force. He pointed out the commitment by Congress to the Total Force and the apparent lack of support by DOD. Aspin articulated the issue that was on the mind of many Congressional leaders and the leadership in the National Guard.

Why, for example, when the 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division at Fort Stewart, Georgia, was mobilized, wasn't its Army National Guard round-out brigade (the 48<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade) activated as well? Why wasn't the 155<sup>th</sup> Armored Brigade in Mississippi called up with the First Cav?

In Operation Desert Shield, the Department of Defense has a unique opportunity to test the reserve system, generally, and the validity of the active component's concerns about the need for refresher training for reserve combat units, more specifically. We recognize that there is considerable resistance within the active component to utilizing the reserves for combat missions. Active duty generals want to command infantrymen and tank crews, not supply sergeants and truck drivers, Yet, given increased warning times, we may in the future wish to place far more combat capability in the reserve and guard, while maintaining a broad combat support and combat service support base in the active forces. According to the General Accounting Office analysis, many combat skills, in fact, require far less training time to maintain proficiency than combat support and combat service support skills and are, therefore, particularly well suited for assignment to the reserves.9

Secretary Cheney responded by letter on September 18, 1990. In his letter he restated his commitment to the Total Force policy and noted two reasons he did not deploy reserve combat units.

First, my senior military advisers have not advised me that the call-up of such units is necessary at this time, Secondly, the statutory time limits on the use of Selected Reserve units imposes artificial constraints on their employment. That we have not called up Selected Reserve combat units thus far in no way reflects adversely upon those units, which generally are well-manned and well-equipped thanks to the strong support that Congress and the Executive Branch have given to this element of the Total Force for the past decade.

The statutory limitation upon the availability of Selected Reserve units and personnel limits our ability to make the most effective use of Selected Reserve units. Under Section 673b of Title 10, Selected Reserve units may be ordered to active duty for 90 days, with the possibility of extension for an additional 90 days. Given the harsh conditions in which U.S. Forces in the Middle East operate, regular rotation of units into and out of the region over time will be required. 10

The rationale for the first reason violated the Army's roundout concept. Today, law and policy have been amended to provide the President necessary access to the units and individual members. One of the major changes to Section 12304 (formerly Section 673b) Presidential Selected Reserve Call Up (PSRC), Title 10, United States Code, extended the period of time Reservists can be ordered involuntarily to active duty from 180 to 270 days. The PSRC process is now streamlined affording regional CINC's quick access to reserve component combat forces.

There is a perception on the part of many in the Defense community and the media that the three Roundout Brigades were incapable of deploying. The fact is that they met the Army's deployability criteria but were never given the mission to deploy and no sealift was ever scheduled for them. All of the roundout brigades and battalions met the readiness deployability criteria established by the Army Mobilization and Operations Planning System (AMOPS) on the first day of federalization. The deployment readiness requirements were significantly increased for the roundout units after they were federalized. 12 Prior to Desert Storm most Army combat units, active and reserve, were rated at C-3 or higher. The standard set for deployment of the Army Guard brigades by the Army was C-1. The unit selected to replace the 48<sup>th</sup> Brigade as part of the 24<sup>th</sup> Division was the 197th Brigade at Fort Benning. While not at the new deployability standard at selection, the unit was C-1 "across the board prior to deployment as well as after." The active unit selected to replace the 155th Brigade was the  $1^{\rm st}$  Brigade of the 2d Armored Division. While it did not have a separate Unit Statues Report (USR), FORSCOM judged it to be a high C-2 or low C-1 when assigned to the  $1^{\rm st}$  Cavalry Division. It was built at Fort Hood by drawing people and equipment from active units there. A significant number of active units did not meet AMOPS criteria before

they deployed but their readiness ratings were subjectively upgraded to meet deployment requirements. 13

Ninety-one days after call-up and as the war ended, the 48th brigade was judged to be combat ready after observation of its performance at the National Training Center (NTC). Had the two brigades been mobilized on August 22 with a similar training plan, both brigades could have been ready for deployment in early December. The 91 days included 74 collective training days. The DAIG estimated that an additional 24 days would have been spent in stand-down from training, movement, and transportation for a total of 115 days from call to deploy for the 48th. It is interesting to note that none of the active component combat units were required to validate prior to deployment. The 48th brigade and the 155th Brigade outperformed both replacement brigades in gunnery performance during their respective NTC rotations. 14 The roundout brigade and battalion commanders stated in debriefings that a FORSCOM prescriptive training program was imposed on their commands without input from them or their active brigade commanders. The roundout commanders were emphatic that they were not provided mission guidance, were not allowed to develop a Mission Essential Task List, and their commands were effectively taken away by observer controllers. <sup>15</sup> The prescriptive training program lengthened the time they needed to prepare for deployment.

#### POST DESERT STORM

On April 12, 1994 the Secretary of the Army issued a policy statement identifying fifteen Enhanced Brigades as the principal Reserve Component ground combat forces of the United States Army. Enhanced brigades are Army National Guard combat brigades, organized, equipped, and trained to provide a strategic hedge against an adverse major regional conflict in a two major regional conflict scenario. "The term enhanced, refers to increased resource and manning priorities with improved training strategies during premobilization that ensure their ability to ready to deploy at a readiness rating of C-1 by 90 days after call up."16

The BUR study was conducted to select the right strategy, force structure, modernization programs, supporting industrial base and infrastructure to provide for America's defense in the post-Cold War era. The threat or dangers considered in conducting the BUR have since been modified in <a href="The National Security Strategy">The National Security Strategy</a>, published in 1995 by the executive branch. The National Security Strategy places requirements on the Department of Defense to provide a flexible Army that is capable of operating across the full range of military operations. While the primary focus of

the strategy is winning our Nation's wars, it also envisions Army forces employed on more Operations Other than War to protect important interests. The strategy identifies four principal dangers which our military must be able to address: "regional instability, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, transitional dangers and the dangers to democracy and reform in the former Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and elsewhere."<sup>17</sup>

Our National Military Strategy requires sufficient US forces sized to fight and win two nearly simultaneous major regional conflicts. This strategy identifies the need for reserve forces as a critical component to the strategic concept after a conflict or engagement begins. Employments would "generate the required forces by withdrawing from lower priority missions and mobilizing critical reserve forces." With reference to reserve component forces, the approach is to seek "compensating leverage"; that is, to use the reserve components to reduce the risks and control the costs of smaller active forces.

The relevancy of the two MRC scenario is also a subject of on going heated debate. How likely is it the we would be drawn into two major wars at the same time? There are a number of countries that have the potential and the ability to wage a major conventional war and have a tenuous relationship with the US: North Korea, Iran, Iraq, Syria,

China and potentially the former Soviet Union. The model used to develop the force in the BUR postulated an Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and a nearly simultaneous invasion by North Korea of South Korea. Critics of the model point to disparities between the stated requirements for waging two major wars concurrently with the existing and planned forces that would actually be available. It is important to note that the BUR ignored the impact of the requirements for operations such as Haiti, Somalia and now Bosnia on our capacity to fight another Korean and Persian Gulf war at the same time. <sup>19</sup>

Defense Secretary William Perry implied that the two MRC scenario should be redefined by stating: "Pentagon planners have never anticipated that the U.S. would face two full-blown conflicts at once. But neither do they want to tempt another country to take advantage of a U.S. preoccupation with an existing military commitment."<sup>20</sup>

The two MRC strategy establishes the requirements for force structure based on the threat spelled out in the BUR. Determining the force levels for this range of contingencies contemplated in the BUR is difficult and a moving target, as the unpredictable world situation changes. The two MRC scenario is a subset of possible scenarios identified by the BUR. It mandates forces solely for two contingencies with

no consideration for other operations. Additionally, the threat based analysis lacks credibility because the factors have been dated by changes in technology and doctrine. The logical path or alternative currently being discussed by many military planners is a flexible capabilities based force, that would focus on the desired capabilities of the force as opposed to the threat.

To enhance the readiness required for a capabilities based force, reserve component readiness must be provided sufficient resources and funding allocations to meet readiness levels required by the Army. "Reserve component combat forces will both augment and reinforce deployed active forces and backfill for active forces deployed to a contingency from other critical regions."<sup>21</sup>

All factors affecting the accomplishment of those missions must be considered before the National Guard is assigned national security missions. Moreover, the National Command Authority, under the Graduated Mobilization Response system, must have access to the reserve components and be able to flexibly apply them in force generation and projection across a wide spectrum of contingencies. When operational security and surprise are important to the success of contingency missions, it is more difficult to involve the reserve component. Reserve forces must be

resourced at levels consistent with their assigned missions to assure they maintain the correct readiness posture. Finally, RC units must be capable of deploying by the required dates specified in contingency plans so their "availability" is appropriate to their missions.

We must not pretend the Army National Guard should be maintain the same peacetime training readiness as its Active counterpart. General John R. Galvin, former Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, commented, "It all boils down to the fact that you cannot train as well on about 40 days a year as you can on about 250 days a year. And that's the difference between the Reserve and Active Forces."22 General Galvin is correct, Reserve component units will not be able to achieve the same readiness standards training 40 days a year as you can 250 days a year. It was never contemplated that reserve combat forces would be immediately ready for combat. The success of the field artillery brigades activated for Desert Shield/Desert Storm, performance of the 48th Infantry Brigade and the  $155^{\rm th}$  Armor Brigade during their respective NTC rotations demonstrated reserve combat brigade size units or smaller could be ready for deployment in 90 days or less.

A correlation between the performance of these units and Guard Divisions can be drawn. The primary discriminator in readiness between an enhanced brigade and a Guard

divisional brigade is resourcing. In other words, if the remaining Guard divisions were resourced in a similar manner as the enhanced brigades it would be reasonable to assume they would be able to be ready for deployment in a 90 day window.

Considering the current and projected reductions in the Army's portion of the DOD's budget, one cost effective and efficient method to build a capabilities based force is to resource the Guard divisions along with the existing fifteen enhanced brigades. The National Military Strategy does not include the Guard divisions, in the two MRC scenario, however the BUR included them to provide additional combat power, extra security and flexibility to deter or fight anything beyond one MRC. The Strategy is built around a ten division active force. A viable cost effective alternative to maintaining a 10 division active force is to combine a portion of two or more of the active divisions with enhanced brigades. The divisional headquarters would be all active duty personnel and the maneuver brigades would be replaced by the enhanced brigades. The reduction of two active divisions appears to be the course of action the Army will take to generate funding for modernization, not due to any change in strategy, doctrine or policy. This active component shortfall can be compensated for by resourcing a

robust reserve combat force comprised of Guard brigades and divisions.

Guard Divisions are resourced as directed in October of 1994 by the Vice Chief of Staff of the Army to maintain a C-3 readiness level. This inadequate resourcing of the National Guard Divisions will lead to the eventual degradation in personnel, equipment and training readiness for these units. This trend must be reversed or the Guard divisions will rapidly fall to unacceptable readiness levels. The divisions are expected to perform missions, such as providing rotational forces for extended crises and protracted peace operations. These forces would also would be called upon to meet domestic emergencies such as natural disasters and civil unrest.

A March, 1995 Government Accounting Office (GAO) report suggested that the Army could not provide sufficient numbers of certain types of non-divisional support units for two MRC's. The report stated the Army had difficulty providing such units in the Persian Gulf War-a single regional conflict. "An option for augmenting the non-divisional support capability is to use existing support capability-units, personnel, and equipment-in the eight National Guard divisions that DOD did not include in the combat force for executing the two conflict strategy."<sup>23</sup>

The Army was able to compensate for the shortcoming because of the long lead time to deploy, good host nation support and no simultaneous second conflict requiring a U.S. response. The report further stated "while it may be expedient to access divisional support units to provide non divisional capability, this alternative must be weighed against the value of these divisions for other missions. Stripping the support units from Guard Divisions, or even planning to take them would effectively make those units non deployable and non relevant."<sup>24</sup>

An alternative has been proposed and agreed to by the Adjutant's General Association of the United States to solve the Army's 58,000 spaces shortfall of non-divisional support units, by converting one scout group and spaces in eleven brigades to provide validated and missioned combat support and service support units to meet the shortfall outlined in the GAO report. The Adjutant's General Association reiterated their commitment to "integrating active component and Guard structure".<sup>25</sup>

The Adjutants General (AG's) stated their belief regarding the remaining traditional divisions that are not converted that: (1) they "are vital to the long-range security of the nation, (2) their role must be recognized, (3) they must be better integrated into the defense plans,

and (4) they must be resourced adequately to accomplish their missions."25

The proposal was accepted by the Army's General Officer Working Group (GOWG), chaired by Sara E. Lister, Assistant Secretary of the Army, and the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations and Plans, which is charged with making recommendations on the division issue to the Vice Chief of Staff of the Army, who is expected to accept the recommendation.

## CONCLUSION

The performance of the Field Artillery units in Desert Shield/Desert Storm and the Enhanced Brigades at the NTC have provided sufficient evidence that reserve combat forces can meet or exceed the requirements for combat operations with a post mobilization program of 90 days or less. To ensure reserve combat brigade readiness, they must be allowed to conduct multiechelon training at company level in infantry and armor units and battalion level in field artillery. This training must be consistent with the doctrine published in FM 25-101 and not artificially constrained to squad and platoon level. Training plans need to developed with active duty counterpart units to develop the linkage between the collective mission essential tasks

and the supporting leader and soldier tasks. There needs to be a close training association between the active component and reserve component units to assist in training and evaluation of all reserve combat brigades.

The Guard divisions have about one third of the maneuver combat structure of the Total Army. If provided the resources similar to those provided to the enhanced brigades the combat brigades of the Guard divisions would be able to attain the same readiness levels. Guard divisional brigades need to be provided training opportunities at the Army's combat training centers to attain and maintain the capability to deploy into a theater for combat operations within 90 days of post mobilization training or less. The divisional brigades could be used to roundup an active component division or could be deployed under their existing divisional configuration. The reserve combat forces are the answer to maintaining the necessary combat power in the United States Army to meet the requirements of our National Military Strategy in response to a unpredictable global threats.

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